

Dr. Burgess Weekly Address April 13, 2018  
Protecting American Consumers in the Digital Age

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Hello, this is your Congressman Michael Burgess.

We live in an increasingly-connected world. The internet has become integral to all parts of contemporary American life. From using online banking, to watching YouTube videos and connecting with friends, we all spend a significant portion of our lives inputting data to the internet. This has led to many great improvements in our standard of living; however, progress must be balanced. As we've seen in recent years, no one can be 100 percent risk free. Data security is an important issue that affects everyone.

On Wednesday, the House Energy and Commerce Committee held a hearing with Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg. After recent reporting about Facebook's mishandling of consumer data, Committee was concerned with the company's use and protection of consumer data. Almost 87 million Americans have agreed to let Facebook into their lives. Our goal for the hearing was to understand how Facebook allows applications to access and use the data that its users entrusted to it.

Consumers ultimately are responsible for what they share online. Consumers also should have the tools and resources they need to understand how to protect their own data. For example, we all are guilty of skipping through "terms and conditions" before downloading an app or using a service. However, companies can make it easier for Americans to access the information they need to protect their personal information.

I appreciate that Mr. Zuckerberg accepted our committee's invitation to testify, he came voluntarily, and he respectfully considered our questions. On Wednesday, I had the opportunity to ask him about some of these important issues, and get information for North Texans and all Americans. While we still don't have all the answers, this hearing served as an opportunity to educate the millions of Americans who provide their personal information to Facebook and other companies online, as well as demonstrate the need for companies to be good stewards of user-generated data.

As we progress further with both technological advances and the new concerns that go with them, it is certain that this issue will remain a priority for this Congress and many years to come. I will continue to seek answers for the millions of North Texans who entrust their data to the internet-based companies each day.

As always, I appreciate your comments and your concerns on this issue or any other issue. May God bless you and your family and as the song says, God bless you Texas.